TWILIGHT

ALEXANDER MACKENZIE LAMB

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The Sign of His Coming

FEB 14 1918
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BY

ALEXANDER MACKENZIE LAMB

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PREFACE

ON that fateful night before the dawn of the first Good Friday when the mob, incited by the Church, had secured the arrest of Jesus and brought Him before the highest religious tribunal in Jerusalem, Caiaphas and his comrades were perplexed as to how they could effect the conviction and execution of their distinguished Prisoner; this disturber of religious tradition and decorum.

The sacred dignity of that Presence before the high priest so deeply affected the honorable Caiaphas that he suddenly propounded the vital question of modern religious inquiry, "Tell us whether thou be the Christ the Son of God." "Jesus saith unto him, Thou has said. Nevertheless I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the

clouds of Heaven." Matthew 26:63-66. These two bold declarations concerning his Deity and his personal Return called forth the denunciation from the high priest, enforced by the maddened crowd, "He hath spoken blasphemy. He is worthy of death."

Since the conviction and crucifixion of Jesus was based upon this two-fold claim of his Deity and his miraculous Appearing "at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of Heaven," we are drawn to approach the study of that majestic Return with reverence and with solemn awe. It is a holy mystery and we remove our sandals as we turn aside to inquire into the significance of these promises and prophecies concerning this supreme Day of days, this Event of events in the later history of Man.

Since the Biblical scholars of Europe and America have made such rich contributions to the critical and reverent study of Prophecy as it concerns itself with the return

of our Lord, there might seem to be small reason for a presentation of this subject in a form that is little more than an Introduction to a Scriptural investigation of the doctrine. My answer is simply this. In the frequent and most familiar works on the Premillennial view of the return of Christ, it is usually assumed that we must expect the world to become more and more Satanic till the cup of iniquity is full—and then and then only may we look for our Lord's coming. This view is created in the utter neglect of a great procession of promises of Church triumph for the present Age that extends through the entire range of Scripture. Thus the testimonies of these inspired writers seemed to clash and to clash where the most serene harmony is desired. In reading the parable of the wheat and the tares I was surprised at the evident meaning of the words "Let them both (wheat and tares) *grow* together until the harvest." Quickly I saw that to emphasize only the fact

that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" is not only to paralyze effort for the salvation of men but is also to deny to much of Scripture any sane interpretation. When it came upon me that not only is wickedness to grow more wicked but that righteousness is to become more powerful in the final conflict between Satan and Christ, I felt that my brief message may have a mission in bringing consolation to some who are always depressed by what seems the hopeless reign of evil.

We have been saying that Christ will not come till "that man of Sin is revealed" but we have forgotten to *emphasize* this fact also, that he is delayed in his coming till his Church militant completes the great campaigns against the forces of sin and heathendom that he has announced as his program for his redeemed people. It is not till the Church has fulfilled her glorious mission that the Bridegroom will come for his Bride. *"Looking for*

and *hastening* the Coming" was the Apostle's brief orders to the early Christians. It is a refreshing thought that every believer may help prepare the highway for the King's return; yea, that he cannot come till his people have finished their great tasks. It is with the desire of leading devoted Bible students to see that what the Apostle calls the *Hope* of the Church is not the *Despair* of the Church, that I venture to send forth this brief word concerning the triumphs of Christ that must parallel the wrecks *of evil* before the day of his coming.

ALEX. MACKENZIE LAMB.

The Manse,
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July 17, 1916.

CONTENTS

	Page
Twilight: The Sign of His Coming	13
Harmony Among the Prophets	23
The Purposes of Prophecy	33
Were the Apostles Mistaken?	47
Will the World Grow Worse or Better?	55
What Attitude Shall We Take?	63
The Witness of Science and History	73
Were Jesus and Paul Mistaken?	81

TWILIGHT: THE SIGN OF HIS COMING

Twilight: The Sign of His Coming

A REVERENT study of the Second Advent of our Lord must continue to occupy for all Bible students a conspicuous place in their thought. The unhappy fanaticism associated with the preaching of this doctrine cannot sufficiently cover it with opprobrium to conceal it from the gaze of the Church. The history of all truth is partially declared in the parable of the wheat and the tares. Wherever truth is discovered, falsehood is not far distant; and often falsehood of a most alluring nature, since it resembles truth as closely as tares resemble wheat. Whenever the Church has been favored with a great religious awakening, there has ever followed this harvest of wheat and tares. When Luther saw in vision the conquest of northern Europe for the simple Gospel of Apostolic days, the

entire field was dotted and marred by the appearance of "strange doctrines" which threatened to uproot the entire labor of the Reformers. And yet when we read the story of these German mystics we know that they possessed in an abnormal degree the very truth of religious feeling and experience which might have saved the great Church of Luther from its future formalism, had these devoted men and women been willing to have their exalted religious states measured by the sober interpretation of the written Word. The great contribution which they might have made to the Reformation was worse than wasted since the glorious truth which they experienced was associated with much that was dangerous and false.

Thousands are silent upon the rich truths of the New Testament which reveal the possibilities of heart-cleansing and victory over sin because this heritage of the Church is set forth in extravagant and impossible colors by

some groups of distinctive Holiness teachers. If we abandon all the glorious news of the Gospel because these messages have sometimes been carried by strange uncanny messengers we shall soon find ourselves with a meagre program in the proclamation of the Gospel. And we must study *this* announcement of the Scriptures as we study all the great subjects of Biblical interest,—independent of our own prejudices or the extravagance and follies of some of its unfortunate advocates.

The question before us resolves itself simply into two theories concerning God's revealed purpose as to the future of the race. The two theories are these. (1) Will the race continue under this present order indefinitely; or (2) will the race reach its consummation in a crisis which will end this age and introduce "a new earth." Other related theories must necessarily surrender to the authority of one of these views of the future. And yet

how fruitless is mere speculation on so great a theme. How brief is the journey in which unaided Reason can carry us! The surprises of one generation are entirely contrary to the prophesies of the men who preceded it. What the future reserves for us in any department of life remains beyond the prediction of the wisest of our race. All Life is today disturbed by the murmurings of the underworld, —racial, economic, social, religious. Restlessness and expectancy are in evidence, but even the dreamers of dreams do not know what they even desire to have fulfilled.

It may not be easy to confess that real thinkers are thus classified, but a few moments of absolutely sincere thought reveal to us that all thorough far-reaching programs of racial existence and destiny compel either a philosopher or a theologian to declare that he believes the race must move on indefinitely (and may I not add eternally) to larger or smaller achievements in morals and science, or that

the present Age is to reach a crisis in which the *end* shall be, which end shall prove also to be the *beginning* of the day of the Son of Man —a wondrous and glorious Day when the Kingdoms of this world shall become his own.

The Scriptures surely teach one of these two doctrines and we are compelled to think that if language is intended to convey thought we will not find it difficult to decide where the Scriptures would place us.

In moments of human triumph the Church and the world often unite in declaring that Religion and Science will march shoulder to shoulder through all the deserts and jungles of human Sin and Sorrow till every wild beast is slain and every arid acre is made to bud and blossom as the rose. Such is our happy hope in the moments of elation and apparent conquest of physical and moral evils; but while we are treating the wound in one spot the plague appears in a new place—unexpected and malignant! With this frequent humilia-

tion upon us it is difficult to continue to believe that our greatest longings are to be realized through the processes which we now see in operation—glorious though the fruit of many of these processes evidently is.

Both Holy Scripture and Science declare that the "things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" but that great convulsions and revolutions were necessary in preparation for the world as we behold it to-day; and it is therefore not an improbable thing which confronts us in the Scriptures when we are informed that even greater convulsions and revolutions were yet to follow before God's highest and best is to be the full heritage of His people.

However, we concede that there is nothing in human experience to determine the theory for us, whether we must anticipate an indefinite perpetuation of the race for millions of years or whether God will "cut short the work in righteousness" and usher in a new

and more glorious dispensation, where war and famine and pestilence, suffering and sin, shall no longer blight every garden of fragrance and beauty.

A doctrine is not proven true because a large number of detached texts can be ranged on its side. The texts when studied in the light of their original setting may be vouching for quite another doctrine altogether. A doctrine is to be viewed in the light of the general tenor of Scripture as well as in view of those statements which seem to bear directly upon it. And quite often a great truth is revealed by two opposite and seemingly hostile sets of texts and only when studied in the light of these two divergent views of the same truth are the full facts known. I regard this as vital in the study of Scripture.

Let me invite you to a consideration of what is given us upon the future as it relates to Christ's Coming wherein we are requested to anticipate its realization, both as an an-

nouncement of the *triumph* and also as a confession of the *partial defeat* of righteousness. We cannot consider this subject in even the most unpretentious manner without facing many of the largest questions presented by Biblical investigation. Perhaps it is for this very reason that so many falter and draw back from the entire problem, for the very first step brings us into *the exalted realm of the supernatural.* Reason fails us here as it fails us in our search for facts concerning all the mysterious and yet most haunting longings concerning immortality. If there is no direct Revelation given us we certainly are not wise to indulge the hope that by any modern wisdom we shall learn when or what "the end of the world" shall be. However, I want to call attention to two very interesting facts connected with the general subject of our study in the following brief sections.

HARMONY AMONG THE PROPHETS

HARMONY AMONG THE PROPHETS

IF I doubted the divine origin of the Bible and yet had read the various predictions of the end of the present Age given by Christ and His Apostles, I would certainly be seriously impressed with the following facts. First, it would surprise me to learn that no other group of teachers has ever ventured in an attempt to even suggest a definite culmination of the present order of things. If among the giant minds that have devoted themselves to the cause of Christianity or indeed to Religion or Philosophy in any form, there has not been a single spirit so enlightened as to feel entitled to speak upon so weighty a subject, then the men who did speak and write with such simple assurance would impress me with the alternative, that they must have been either the princes of egotists or that they believed themselves enlightened of God.

Accompanying this would necessarily be another suggestive fact, viz., that although the Lord Jesus and His Apostles wrote or were reported under a variety of circumstances which would naturally furnish a variety of thought or want of uniformity of prophecy, yet there is in all these most startling portrayals of the final earthly Crisis a striking harmony and uniformity amidst the great variety of language and changed emphasis brought before us. Indeed, it is difficult for an honest Bible student to evade this conviction, that these men were taught of God as to the end of the Age and the Coming of our Lord.

Our Liberal Critics most graciously admit that these poetic pictures of the great crisis at the end of this Age have behind them or beneath them or within them, an important fact; but that they cannot be held up as an exact program of the Second Coming of the Son of Man. They do not base their objec-

tions to this abrupt ending of all the affairs of men upon any definite theory, but insist that the speakers themselves were evidently misled as to the *time* when these things should be and thus were not safe guides as to the events themselves.

Let us first give some thoughtful inquiry into what Christ actually said about His return which appears on the surface as being difficult to harmonize. It is insisted that both Christ and the Apostles taught that the return of the Lord was to be witnessed by men of that generation and that they evidently believed that many then living would see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven.

There are always storm-texts as well as proof-texts for every theory; but the ones most frequently cited from the statements of Christ are the familiar words of Matthew 16:28, "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His

Kingdom." Both Mark and Luke record with great precision the same statement of Christ; each one following with a report of the Son of Man "after six days" transfigured upon the Mount with the frightened and yet worshipful disciples gazing upon "The Son of Man coming in His Kingdom." To them it was there given to have a glimpse of the transcendent glory which will some day dazzle the vision of a redeemed Church in the Kingdom of Heaven. In miniature the great scene was before them and the pledge made by Christ was most quickly and literally fulfilled. The difficulty here then is a purely imaginary one, requiring no high order of intellect or scholarship but rather an approach to the subject with the expectation that its interpretation lies within the reach of the normal mind. These very Disciples *did* "See the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom" on the mount of transfiguration.

The more intricate reply of Christ to the

inquiry of the Disciples, "Tell us when shall these things be? And, what shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the world?" (Matt. 24:3), involves far too much to be treated fully in so brief a manner even were I equal to the task. And yet may I ask you to consider with me also this two-fold question and then study at your leisure Christ's two-fold answer and see if our difficulties here also are not greatly lessened? Christ is speaking of the overthrow of the Temple and the downfall of Jerusalem when a little later under the shades of Olivet the Disciples recall his pathetic recital of the impending doom; and longing for fuller particulars they group what in their minds had come to occupy the same place in Time—the overthrow of the Holy City and the overthrow of the world. Indeed it was impossible for them to conceive of a world moving on in its usual activities with Jerusalem practically gone. Thus their query, "When shall these things be?" (Jeru-

salem in ruins with its temple razed to the ground) "And what shall be the sign of thy Coming and of the end of the world?" The remainder of this 24th of Matthew with the one following is the Evangelists' report of the reply, graphic indeed and highly parabolic, but nevertheless a divine answer to a human question. It is folly to insist that the different crises reported by Matthew as being given by our Lord is a clear and satisfying one. We do not question one statement in the entire series of startling declarations given us in this answer, but we do not feel compelled to believe that Matthew has always given us in the exact order the discourse as it came from the lips of the great Teacher. No possible interpretations can relieve us of all our difficulties in this study; but the statement that "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled" is enlarged in its meaning when we remember that the Greek term here is frequently translated *"family"* or *"race,"* as

well as *"generation."* And surely the Jewish family or race is as much in evidence to-day as when He spoke the words from the hill which overlooked their capitol. The generation of the Jews remains and will remain to witness the pageant so painfully culminating in the closing up of Time. The overthrow of Jerusalem which was to be witnessed by that most unhappy people was so disastrous an hour as to typify in a very lurid manner the great day of His wrath when all nations would witness His executions against the iniquities of all cities. It is quite easy to see how the description in this chapter of Jerusalem's downfall merges into the larger problem of which it is but a type, a most awful and impressive symbol! The Disciples proposed a double question and Christ has given a twofold answer. Jerusalem fell before the armies of Rome and its ghastly ruin was typical of an event that will involve all cities—"the sign of Thy Coming and of the end of the world."

THE PURPOSES OF PROPHECY

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WHAT our eminent scholars have said upon the functions of the prophet or the mystery of his message needs here no duplication. There are simpler and yet no less vital features of this matter before us, related to much that interests all minds hungering for facts concerning the great Unseen and the possibility and certainty of communication between these two worlds. All who lay away their beloved dead awake to the seriousness of this appealing and insatiable heart-cry, "Is there life beyond and does a voice speak to us from behind the cloud?" A study of prophecy as preserved for us in the Scriptures gives a comforting answer. It is true that we are not dependent alone upon what has been preserved to us in Holy Writ, but we certainly

cannot dispense with such telling evidence as it provides. However, we do not know with our very limited intelligence what the entire purpose of God has been in transmitting through chosen vessels the long series of prophetic utterances which were compiled during the centuries in which the canon of Scripture was being completed.

Christ very clearly declares the truth was spoken in Parables by Him that the worldly wise might see and hear and yet be left blind and deaf. Truth was only to be bought at a large price and its discovery made by men of earnest spirit,—men who search for it as for hidden treasure. One of the very charms of Parables is the evident and latent facts enshrouded in elusive mystery. The untraveled area provides an unending study so that no group of students can ever exhaust the field. Is not the very same principle before us in the study of Prophecy as of Parables? The two are often related and sometimes joined,

and the study of one throws light upon the other.

Now it was within the possibilities of the Holy Spirit to have declared through the prophets that Christ would be born in Bethlehem and brought up in Nazareth, but instead of this He announces through the prophets that while the future Messiah was to come from Bethlehem, "He shall be called a Nazarene." It took patient study of history to reconcile these and many other similar declarations concerning our Lord. When you now read the life of Christ in the light of the great prophecies concerning Him you marvel that any honest student of the Old Testament can reject the Christ of the New. If the predictions of the Old Testament were thus clouded in mystery concerning the First Advent of our Lord, must we not be patient with ourselves and with all inquirers who long to know the truth and yet who are perplexed as to what is written concerning His Second

Coming? Must we not be willing to wait in reverent study of these great predictions assured that as the seeming impossible and irreconcilible statements of the ancient prophets were all made to fit into the warp and woof of the seamless robe which covered His sacred form, so we shall discover when "He appears the Second Time without sin unto salvation" that every particular of the program was entirely realized, and the "Appearing of our God and Saviour" had been most wisely intimated to us by both the Lord Jesus and those who gave inspired testimony of His purpose to come again.

We who study the Scriptures to-day to learn what has been revealed about His Coming at the end of this present Age, are more favored than were those who waited like Anna and Simeon for the consolation of Israel in the person of the Messiah. We have not only a much more explicit group of prophetic utterances than had been granted to the wait-

ing Israelites and so have a fuller knowledge of God's purpose in the Second Advent of His Son; but we may also be saved from certain serious blunders which were made by these ancient seekers for the truth in noting the fact that what was often a spiritual promise they mistook for a material blessing and thus created in their own minds prejudices which made it practically impossible to receive the promised One when He appeared among them. Indeed the entire chosen race seemed less prepared for His coming than did the Gentile nations which surrounded them and to whom He was soon to be revealed when the Jews had rejected their promised Redeemer. With these facts before us, we must of necessity be less dogmatic than otherwise and be influenced in both our study and conclusions by the pathetic memory of a Hebrew scholarship which flooded the literature of that day with an expectation of an age of wealth and national power and conquest; all

to be cast to the winds in the coming of the "Lowly One having salvation."

The precise method of that Second Coming we may not determine and yet the main features are not left undefined, whether we listen to the Lord Jesus before Caiaphas declaring that "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven," or turn to the majestic prophecies left us by those giant Apostles—Peter and Paul,—where we find the same extraordinary predictions all so distinctly in the realm of the super-natural and yet all in such unique harmony, that we stand in reverence and worship and marvel while we adore.

There is, however, a disturbing objection which merits more than usual consideration. Those cavillers who argue that the physical conditions depicted are improbable, "In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the earth also and the works

that are therein shall be burned up," (II Peter 3:10) know not of what they speak. If some slight disorder in the sun can bring the tornadoes and floods which are sweeping America while I write, a great conflagration among the stars would have before it an easy task to call forth the slumbering flames in the earth's interior and wrap our planet in a sheet of fire. Thoughful scientists find no difficulty in that method of ruin foretold in the Epistles. The real problem is quite different in its nature.

It is urged by many able and devout scholars that the Apostles themselves were deceived as to the time of the Second Coming and were expecting the Lord during the first generation of the Christian era. We must maintain stoutly however that *they did not so declare!* It is most probable that they did not expect the conflict between good and evil to continue for two thousand years. When Isaiah and Daniel foretold in glowing figures the happy

hour when the Desire of all nations should come they did not know that many long weary centuries must drag on before the silence and monotony of its seeming hopelessness would be broken by the song of the angels to the shepherds of Judea. Indeed it is evident that none of the prophets fully interpreted the divine revelations made to them. The following statement by Simon Peter throws much light upon the entire range of prophecy and declares that while the revelation which was communicated to the world in the Old Testament was a true one, the messenger through whom the message came was often in darkness as to its large meaning. Read carefully this statement by Simon Peter, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently; searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." (I Peter 1:10-12).

We remember how Jeremiah in the great anguish of his soul, conscious of his delusion, cried out, "Oh Lord, Thou hast deceived me!" Nothing had been fulfilled in the manner anticipated by this prophet of tears. Every jot and tittle must be fulfilled but all so strangely and untimely from the prophet's viewpoint. Hath not all this its lessons for us? If the prophets of the redemptive work of our Lord were not clear as to "what manner of time" the tragedy of the Cross would occur in the history of the Race, why should we be surprised if the prophets of the Second Coming of our Lord were left uninformed upon so interesting an expectation of the exact time of His return. The promise of the Messiah was for all generations of the Hebrew people as a stimulus to keep in readiness for the great hour; and the makers of the New Testament were writing for all the Church—though they probably knew it not—till the day of His appearing to receive His

Bride and conduct her back to His Father's House.

If these seers of the Old Testament dimly beheld the Coming of the Christ and yet under their exalted illumination were not informed as to the year or decade or century to be thus glorified by this event of all history as well as of all prophecy, need we marvel if the New Testament seers give evidence of a limited vision beyond which they could not peer. However, there is much to be said against this generous concession, and I feel that we may profit by a study of what suggests itself regarding it. Our danger after accepting any great doctrine or theory is to expect all other doctrines to bow before our idol and all texts to throw some fresh light upon our new discovery. The Bible is broader than this and ignores the anticipations or prejudices of the usual student.

It becomes evident as we study the prophecies that many of them have a two-fold ap-

plication; first, to a smaller event; and second, to a larger one of which the smaller incident is a type or suggestion. Many of the ancient predictions of the coming Messiah applied in a meagre way to Moses or David or Daniel and then its fuller significance was discovered alone in the ministry and sacrifice of our Lord. It is useless to object to these confusing features of prophecy,—its two-fold and oftimes misleading message. The exalted purposes of prophecy are evidently realized by this obscure manner of revelation, luring honest hearts to study and research, comparing Scripture with Scripture and thus preparing reverent and devout minds for the rich fruits of such patient toil and leaving superficial and feverish students in the shadow of their own conceits.

WERE THE APOSTLES MISTAKEN?

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WHEN we consider the foregoing we are persuaded that the principles so evident in the Old Testament predictions of the future are naturally to be expected in the continued prophetic utterances of Christ and His Apostles; viz., that much that is given us as a *Hope for all generations of Christians* is also foreshadowed by events familiar to those who hear the word spoken. Thus we saw how the overthrow of Jerusalem as recorded in the twenty-fourth of Matthew was a type of "The end of the world;" and it is evident that death is also thus classified as an event which is like the Judgment and the Coming of Christ. "Be ye also ready for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh," must have included the crisis of death as well as the end of the Age. If this is too liberal an

exegesis I have only to reply that it seems in harmony with the poetic freedom with which great religious truths are given us in the Scriptures, in their garb of Oriental imagery —the loose flowing garments of Eastern thought. This interpretation of texts avoids many apparent contradictions and is in accord with much that we *know* to be two-fold in its larger meaning in both the Old and New Testament writings.

The last word is not yet spoken by any voice on this highly interesting subject. When the Apostles declared, "The end of all things is at hand," it is not evident that they were thinking of what we speak of as, "The end of this present Age." Persecution was rife, the slaughter of the saints was soon to begin, the number of martyrs were to glorify the new Religion in all the tortures by which the prince of darkness was to continue his warfare; and those who were to escape would soon be overtaken by the hastening steps of the last enemy

who bears the name of Death. Why then live for Time when Eternity is so near—"The end of all things is at hand." These types and shadows of the great final crisis are spoken of in language similar to that used for the mighty event itself.

Another very weighty consideration is the explicit language of explanation which the Apostle Paul uses in correcting the idea gathered from his Letters; for what he had written in his first epistle to the Thessalonians had been interpreted as declaring that, "The day of Christ is at hand." To correct this misinterpretation the Apostle states most clearly in his Second Epistle that he had been wrongly read, that there were great devices of Evil which were not yet in evidence to be fulfilled before the end could come. "Be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of the Christ is at hand." (II Thess. 2:2). If the first generations of

Christians so sadly blundered in their study of what St. Paul had written upon the Second Coming, may not modern students be guilty of the same error? We sincerely think that they are! Satan and Christ are each to do mighty things first.

It would seem that the great Apostle was permitted to see in dim outline God's future program to precede the Second Advent as Daniel foresaw the rise and fall of empires which must precede the first coming of the Man of Nazareth; but that neither of these heralds of these days of destiny were permitted to judge of the necessary time to elapse before the clock should strike the hour. Whatever conviction our study of these views may finally create, it seems most evident that the prophetic writers of both dispensations were given very clear revelations of God's far-reaching purposes which projected into the distant future, but that their *private interpretation* of these same unfoldings of the mind

of the Spirit were possibly as faulty as our own. To our safety be it remembered that the Holy Scriptures are the original revelations and are not the defective human interpretation of the message. We are favored with "The sure word of prophecy" and not with "Cunningly devised fables" or the work which came by "The will of man." The great Book gives us the original communications by the Holy Spirit. We are left to discover their deep meanings.

WILL THE WORLD GROW WORSE OR BETTER?

WILL THE WORLD GROW WORSE OR BETTER?

THERE remains one large question which I confess is far beyond my ability to answer, but I may be permitted to state what brings a sense of rest to my own spirit when I find an imperative answer demanded. The question is this, "Will Good or Evil triumph in this present Age?" I need not add that to every true heart there can be but one longing—the triumph of Good—unless that heart is buried beneath a mountain of theories and prejudices which forbid the recognition of the forces at work. If this were a mere compilation of texts I should find myself standing between two Egyptian pyramids each as gigantic as the other; for the predictions which declare that the forces of Evil will not relax till their

last relentless blow is struck against the Kingdom of God, is only equalled by prophecy and parable which tell us that the Lord Jesus "Will not fail nor be discouraged until He has set judgment in the earth." It is not surprising that two camps have been formed among devout believers of these prophetic utterances—known as the Pre and Post-Millenarians. But is not the truth to be found in marching between these same pyramids and not by ignoring either one or the other?

Is not the great fact probably this, that as the sound of the closing campaign is heard, the battle between Good and Evil is more severe, the children of the Kingdom more aggressive in winning the world in allegiance to their Lord; and the Prince of Darkness by more cunning and subtle devices, luring yea, dragging men into the snares placed for their feet? Thus, the whole world is brought to combat and the forces of Good and Evil both marked

by an intensity that made it possible for the prophetic picture to portray either the onward march of the "Prince of the power of the air, the Spirit, that now worketh in the children of disobedience," or the soldiers of the Cross shouting in triumph, "This Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached to all nations as a witness to them and then shall the end come." Both the wheat and tares must *grow* together until the harvest. It is folly however, to permit human Reason to imagine that it can determine when these prophetic pictures are finished. There may be many touches by the Divine Artist which are far too delicate for man's vision to discover. To us the prophecy may seem fulfilled while to Him it is yet incomplete and requires time for the Church to finish her stupendous task, and time also for the Amorites to fill its cup of iniquity to the brim. We know not what great Moral Reform, Social Regeneration, Spiritual Revivals and Racial Progress is unfulfilled, nor

how large are God's purposes which we are destined to witness accomplished in any of these spheres; neither do we know what apostasy of the Church we must behold, how the gods of gold and silver and force will supplant the God of Heaven and Earth, how man will bow to Science rather than Jehovah, the creature rather than the Creator; to lust and greed and pleasure—before the end shall be. Like the mighty sea with its ebb and flow, it may rise and fall till the storm breaks and the wild billows lash themselves in their destructive rage. Thus may Good and Evil, God and Satan, push the battle till the final Crisis. Of that day and hour, I do not even conjecture. It may be at hand or my Lord may delay His coming. *Every man must be on his watch!*

This brief answer to a large question may not satisfy all who share in the same blessed Hope of the glorious Appearing of our Lord. To my own mind the definite pledges are suffi-

cient to bring both comfort and expectation. The wheat and the tares must grow together; the sheep and the goats must graze side by side; the righteous and the wicked must share in life's blessings and labors and successes and bear together its burdens and its griefs. The whole world must hear the glad tidings of great joy and all nations must sit beneath the rays of light from the Cross; the final purposes of God must be realized and the Son of Man "Shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied"—then shall the Heavens be illumined with the brightness of His coming and all the holy angels with Him. Glorious precious Hope! Our hearts keep calling out, "Watchman, what of the night?" and the answer comes back in clear tones, "The night cometh and also the morning." Wonderful morning, when shall dawn the beauties of the "New heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." "Even so come Lord Jesus!"

WHAT ATTITUDE SHALL WE TAKE?

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THE large revelation of the Scriptures is too broad for the narrow intellect of man. Few of us can compass the great truths of Christianity and hold them in correct rank in the gallery of our thoughts. We may chide our opponents for their devotion to "Narrow notions" but when measured in the light of a New Testament ideal of truth, we are all guilty of undue emphasis upon those special doctrines to which our own hearts have given their warmest response. It is not surprising then, that there are two camps where the extremes are to be observed toward the doctrine of the Second Coming. In one company all is quiet and the great Hope of the Church in our Lord's return is unobserved by even a passing reference. If one inquires

why this silence upon a subject so prominent in the Gospels and the Epistles, he will probably be told that the doctrine when discussed only awakens controversy and confusion; that fanatics are lured into a study of such minute and pretentious claims as to predict the exact time when the heavens shall give back to earth the Lord of life and glory and the throne of David shall once more be established in the ancient coasts of Judea. The doctrine is so unfortunately presented by those who insist that they understand the entire program of the days of judgment and further reign, that these teachers discard those thrilling sections of New Testament prediction which seeks to unfold them. We must not be impatient with those who are thus affected. It is not strange that the wild and premature cry of the self-appointed messenger, "Behold the bridegroom cometh," should have had this pathetic sequel. The bridegroom did not appear and as the silence of the long night wore

on men slumbered and slept, while others who were awake declared that He had already come and gone or that He would never again appear. However, the promise was given as He ascended from the crest of Olivet and the same promise *must* be fulfilled. "This same Jesus which is taken up into heaven from you, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11). He has already come in many ways but He has not yet come "in like manner" as He went, and it is for this return that we must labor and watch. The details of that great event may be both spiritual and literal so that we need not insist upon our poor meager minds accepting a set of theories which we feel obliged to harmonize; but the great central and glorious truth that He is coming again *"in like manner as He went,"* is too definitely and frequently reiterated to admit of evasion. We must not only face it but rejoice in the triumph of our Lord's return.

However, there are Biblical facts which must strongly influence our estimate and attitude when attempting to place this truth where it is so prominently ranged in Scripture. When it is declared that, "to those who look for Him shall He appear the Second Time without sin unto salvation," it is not to be inferred that the richest promise is reserved for the dreamer and star gazer. Far from it! The *look* which will bring this unspeakable reward is of those who believing in the transitory and discordant things of Time, keep their eyes toward the hills, knowing that our Lord will come to dethrone evil and right wrongs and establish righteousness. Their views about the Second Coming may be dissimilar but their confidence in the final reign of Christ is begotten of the same Spirit. They do not despair at the rumors of war and the sound of strife and the conflict of the nations; for they "endure as seeing Him who is invisible," knowing that He too is at work though as

silently as the leaven which the woman hid in three measures of meal.

We must not fail to notice that the return of our Lord is not emphasized in all the great Epistles—though doubtless assumed—indicating that the Apostles did not rank this truth as an indispensable saving doctrine. Because many of our great pulpits do not give forth a certain note on the Second Coming it is surely not wise for the advocates of this glorious hope to infer that these brother ministers fail to furnish an ample fare for their flocks. The table they provide may have upon it a greater variety of the rich things of Grace than is found in the banquet hall of those who make much of exact appointments and complete display of china and silver with meager tastes of food,—much of doctrine and little of the life hid with Christ in God. Let us beware of this error and rest judgment with God. When the glorious Hope is really seen as *the* Hope it will be preached by all.

Some men are loyal to this truth who only at intervals preach a distinct sermon upon it; though they assume in clear language that the glorious anticipation of our Lord's return is the cause of their abounding joy. With His coming the twilight will soon become noonday. The signs of the Coming are many but we do not know the chronology of the Skies so we do not venture to declare when the time is here. "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless." (II Peter 3:8-14). This is the value of the doctrine,—*detachment* from the world and sin and *at-*

tachment to holiness and heaven. The Bride of Christ must be in readiness for the return of her Lord. The Church must be robed in her beautiful garments,—"without spot and blameless."

THE WITNESS OF SCIENCE AND HISTORY

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IN the ancient predictions concerning the closing of this present age we were furnished such definite data as to provide the Church with scientific and historical facts that would assist her to know where this unprecedented crisis might be expected. It is true that Christ declared that—"of that day and hour knoweth no man" but he as clearly set forth certain startling events in Nature and in future history that would intimate to observing minds that the larger purposes of God for the present age are being fulfilled. Those who have scorned such testimony and have decried as unreliable all such calculations have only to contemplate the deadly European War which has drawn into its perilous net the great Powers of that mili-

tary world beyond the sea. Has the Armageddon of prophecy truely come? As I write its battles are being waged and the end is not yet. Both Christ and the exponents of the great military moves by which the Kingdom of God should extend its borders—in the Gospels and the Apocalypse declared that the world must yet witness and suffer from the slaughter of the coming nations. The announcement of Christ is enlarged by the Apostle John, the tender disciple, the natural opponent of all war.

These two facts the Scriptures urgently press upon our notice: First, that the regular movements of the Universe will be interrupted and that what Science often proudly refers to as the fixed laws of Nature will fail to furnish us any permanent security, while earthquakes beneath us and flaming heavens above us shall announce the temporary character of our present abode and intimate that a greater cataclysm will surely come in which

the present order will be destroyed and a new and divine regime will be quickly ushered in. What is most impressive about this frequent prediction of Nature's irregular actions as furnished us in the Scriptures is that no other group of ancient sages or philosophers have ventured to place such alarming events in their future programs, while the daring writers of the Bible predicted the very occurrences which to-day embarrass the men of Science and baffle the skill of modern life—and may we add, rebuke its proud pretensions and its haughty claims. The security of human life which it has been believed and promised would come to us through the advance of mechanical skill does not arrive. There is no protection against the upheavels of Nature and by flame and flood, by cyclone and earthquakes the poor and the rich are swept from their moorings out into the current of Nature's wild torrents—relentless, pitiless and seemingly purposeless. The Scriptures do not give

us either the cause or the design of these seeming calamities but it does predict their continuance and it announces the devastation that will be thus wrought.

Linked to these predictions concerning the riotous upheavals of Nature are those prophetic views of the great waste of wars among the nations of the earth, as well as the rise and triumph of the beast and the false prophet and other forms of anti-christ. The early conquests of Christianity might have led its advocates to expect the rapid overthrow of Evil and the reign of Christ in all the earth but under an illumination which we are compelled to believe must have been from above, these intense enthusiasts, Peter, Paul, John, all with unanimous pen portray those very infamies which have blotted the pages of Christendom, at the precise hour when the dethronment of Evil seemed most hopeful.

Thus Science and History but fulfill the announcement of Prophecy and the Scriptures

come forth for our comfort, when we see the wrecks of Nature and hear the clash of arms between the great nations of the earth and witness the march of iniquity into the very heart of the Church. Two great distinctive and seemingly contradictory achievements must be fulfilled before the end comes. The "man of sin must be revealed" (II Thess. 2:3) in his violent outbursts in domestic, national, and international combat; while the Prince of Peace moves forth with His armored forces in the work of rescue. The foretastes of millennium bliss must be pressed to the lips of the faithful and the great Hope of the Church must be kept in view lest the disciples lose heart and despair of the final triumph of Christ. *The wheat must grow as well as the tares.* Sin must make its heaviest blow but God must also reveal His saving power. Suddenly will He come bringing back with Him our cherished dead (I Thess. 4:13-18) with whom we shall share the unspeakable joys of

the reign of righteousness. For just as Jesus, the first fruits of the Resurrection returned to His sacred body after three days in the spirit world, so shall all who sleep in Jesus possess again the resurrected and glorified bodies in which they once dwelt. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you *by the word of the Lord* that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout—with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (I Thess. 4:14-18).

WERE JESUS AND PAUL MISTAKEN?

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THE fact that two names are mentioned in the same sentence does not of necessity place those names on the same level. We only couple that of Jesus and Paul because their prophecies are similar in a number of very rare particulars concerning the Second Coming. It is insisted by many that both Jesus and Paul, who were Jews in blood, temperament and racial ambitions and expectations, felt so strongly the influence of the prophetic teachings of the Old Testament that they fell under its sway without their own assent or consciousness. And further, that the doctrine of the return of Christ "upon the clouds of heaven in power and great glory" was but the outcome of these Messianic hopes; which, baffled in his first mission must be fulfilled in his

second. We cannot trust them fully, they argue, since they both believed that the return was almost immediate; and as these 2,000 years of waiting has demonstrated their error in the time of the Return, it is reasonable to believe that they were mistaken also as to the Return itself.

In an earlier page of this treatise the question of their personal belief concerning the time of the Return was touched upon and we saw that far too much has been conceded already on this point. It is true that Christ made the surprising confession that during his earthly career he was so emptied of his former glory and authority and wisdom that "no man knoweth the day nor the hour *neither the Son* but the Father only;" but that was a single utterance and concerned only the exact day and hour of his future Advent.

My purpose in this further treatment of the same phase of the subject is to study more carefully the evident facts and statements.

First, I want to affirm that if anything is known on so great and incomprehensible a subject it must be taught purely by revelation, as the human reason could never devise such a program nor secure such uniform convictions as are maintained by Christ and the Apostles upon this transcendent theme. They all insist that the Lord must come back to this same world that he left, when a new era is to be ushered in and the real triumph of Christ is to be made known.

Small minds hitch great events to a single word or utterance and permit their entire systems of belief to be determined by the dot of an "i" or the cross of a "t." This is a perilous method for truth seekers though a fortunate one for creed makers. Any strange doctrine may be credited and sustained by this mode of study. We fear it as we fear a deep ditch in the darkest night. The question as to whether I am to keep looking for the steady increase of light and truth until the

whole world is filled with its healing gladdening rays; or whether I am to hasten the personal coming of Christ by earnest labors to fulfill His largest promise to the world before He sets up His throne of Judgment, is not to be determined by one text or by two. It is rather to be determined by the clear and oft repeated assertions of Holy Writ.

We are quite prepared to concede that both Christ and the Apostles sometimes evidently referred to death as the time when Christ should come for His believing ones; but this event does not include that greatest of all Comings which is elsewhere described in such majestic and striking language and figures; an event which neither death nor any other known crisis can adequately fulfill. No one can read the pages of the New Testament with an unprejudiced mind without having his attention repeatedly drawn to one crowning day in the history of the Kingdom and the King, the day known as "the day of the Son of

Man."

When Jesus spoke with such frequency and definiteness about His triumphal Return the disciples decided that the "Kingdom of God should immediately appear." To correct this misapprehension we are told in two great parables by our Lord, "that the Lord delayeth his coming" and that much waiting and watching and *large achievement* must be experienced by the Church before the expectant hour of triumph is upon us. (Matt. 25:19, Luke 19:11). It is clearly evident that Jesus did not anticipate an immediate return after his resurrection.

The Apostle to the Gentiles safe-guards himself and his followers by the same careful correction of the misleading views which his earlier writing and preaching had created. In his second Epistle to the Thessalonians he is very definite in his expressions of a conviction that much more of God's program and prophecy and promise for the world must

be wrought out before the glorious day of our Lord's Return. (II Thess. 2:1-17). The statements bearing upon this theme by Peter, by James, by John, must all receive the same generous treatment that we insist must be accorded the words of Jesus and of the Apostle Paul, if they are fairly interpreted and stand before us in an unprejudiced argument.

We contend therefore most earnestly against the flippant remark, now so common, that it is evident that both Jesus and Paul anticipated and taught an almost immediate return of our Lord after His Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. Rather did they teach simply that since no man knoweth the day nor the hour of this crowning event, *the Bride must be ever ready for the coming of her Lord.*

Glorious and wondrous day when the absent and loving Bridegroom shall descend the Heavens to meet His waiting Church and

take her home to the Father's House. But the constant emphasis in both the Parables of Jesus and Letters of the Apostles is upon the inspiring truth that Christ will not come till his Church has finished her glorious task in carrying the Gospel to the ends of the Earth, while she herself—the true Bride—is adorned in cleansed robes, beautified by priceless gems ready for the great presentation at the Father's Throne. "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, oh Zion, put on thy beautiful garments!" The midnight call is past, "Behold the bridegroom cometh" and the first gleams of a distant rising warn us that Twilight, the sign of his appearing is at hand.

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